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ABSTRACT

Mail surveys were conducted to determine minority participation on the 56 daily newspapers in Michigan and the number of minority group students enrolled in accredited 4-year journalism programs at the 5 Michigan universities. Questionnaires were sent to the managing editor of each newspaper requesting the number of full-time employees and the number of Blacks, Mexican Americans, and American Indians employed as news executives, deskmen, reporters, and photographers. Questionnaires were also sent to the 5 journalism department chairmen requesting the number of students enrolled in their programs and the number of Blacks, Mexican Americans, and American Indians. It was found that minority participation on Michigan newspapers was low in proportion to the minority populations in the state. Black participation in the Michigan press was 2.2% while the Black population represented 11% of the state population. Mexican Americans and American Indians had no representation at all in the news media. A suggested solution to this problem was that the journalism schools continue to actively recruit minority students. (PS)

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SURVEY OF MINORITY PARTICIPATION ON MICHIGAN NEWSPAPERS AND IN MICHIGAN SCHOOLS OF JOURNALISM

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SURVEY OF MINORITY PARTICIPATION ON MICHIGAN NEWSPAPERS AND IN MICHIGAN SCHOOLS OF JOURNALISM

Prepared by

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May 1971

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I. Mexican-Americans and American Indians have virtually no representation within the newsgathering operation of Michigan daily newspapers, while blacks constitute only 2%. This was the major finding of a mail survey of minority participation on the 56 daily newspapers in this state.

Questionnaires were sent to the managing editor of each daily requesting the number of full-time employees and the number of blacks, Mexican-Americans and American Indians in the following categories: new executives, deskmen, reporters, and photographers. Twenty-six newspapers responded.

TABLE I

MINORITY PARTICIPATION ON MICHIGAN NEWSPAPERS

	News Executives	Deskmen	Reporters	Photographers
Total employees in each group	93	186.5	356.5	83
Number of black employees	0	2	8	6
Number of Mexican-American employees	0	0	0	0
Number of American Indian employees	0	1	0	0

Among the findings of this survey are the following:

1) Of the 718 persons employed as news executives, deskmen, reporters and photographers on the 26 dailies, 16 or 2.2% are black; none are Mexican-American, one is American Indian.

2) Of the reported 93 news executive positions, assistant city editor through editor, no minorities are represented.

3) Of the 186 deskmen reported, 2 are black and one is American Indian; none are Mexican-American.

4) Of the 356 reporters represented in the study, 8 or 2% are black; none are Mexican-American or American Indian.

5) Of the 83 photographers counted in this study, 6 or 7.2% are black; none are Mexican-American or American Indian.

6) Some newspapers have greater numbers of blacks than others, but no newspaper has more than 4 minority newsmen; 20 newspapers reported none at all.

7) Minority newsmen are to be found most on the higher circulation newspapers (see Table II). The 21 newspapers with circulations under 50,000 reported 1 black reporter and 2 black photographers. Within the 50,000 to 100,000 circulation group, 2 black reporters were reported. No minority newsmen were reported within the 100,000 to 500,000 circulation group. Among the 2 newspapers within the 500,000 circulation group, there are 2 black and 1 American Indian deskmen, 5 black reporters, and 4 black photographers.

TABLE II

MINORITY PARTICIPATION ON MICHIGAN NEWSPAPERS BY CIRCULATION

Circulation	Newspapers Responding	News Executives	Deskmen	Reporters	Photographers
3,500-10,000	11	16	18.5	35.5	12
10,001 25,000	5	11	10	27	7
25,001-50,000	5	23	26	71/1*	13/2*
50,001-100,000	2	8	16	44/2*	9
100,001-500,000	1	10	11	34	6
over 500,000	2	25	105/3 [1]	145/5*	36/4*
TOTALS	26	93	186.5/3 [1]	356.5/8*	83/6*

* 71/1* means that of 71 employees, 1 is black

[1] 2 black and 1 American Indian

II. A similar survey of the five Michigan universities with accredited four-year journalism programs shows that by June 1972 some 33 black and 5 Mexican-American journalism students will have graduated. The universities were Michigan State University, University of Michigan, University of Detroit, Wayne State University, and Eastern Michigan University.

A questionnaire was sent to the five department chairmen requesting that they indicate the number of students enrolled in their journalism programs and the number of blacks, Mexican-Americans, and American Indians enrolled.

Findings of this study are:

1. Of the 561 juniors and seniors majoring in journalism at the 5 schools surveyed, 33 or 5.8% are black, and 5 or .89% are Mexican-American. No American Indians are enrolled.

2. Of the 996 students majoring in journalism, including freshmen and sophomores, 61 or 6.1% are black, and 7 or .7% are Mexican-American.

3. Each of the five schools surveyed have black students majoring in journalism. Only two schools had Mexican-American students; none of the schools has attracted American Indian students into its program.

4. The level of participation for black journalism students by class is: freshmen, 15 or 7%; sophomores, 13 or 5.8%; juniors, 19 or 6.1%; seniors, 14 or 5.5%.

5. The level of participation for Mexican-American students by class is: freshmen, 2 or .94%; sophomores, 0; juniors, 3 or .97%; seniors, 2 or .79%.

TABLE III

MINORITY PARTICIPATION IN MICHIGAN JOURNALISM SCHOOLS

Class	Total Enrollment	Black Students	Mexican-American Students	American Indian Students
Freshmen	212	15	2	0
Sophomores	223	13	0	0
Juniors	309	19	3	0
Seniors	252	14	2	0
TOTAL	996	61	7	0

Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of minority participation on Michigan newspapers is quite low in proportion to the minority populations represented in the state. Black participation in the Michigan press is at a level of 2.2%, while the black population represents 11% in the state and is as high as 58% and 43% in two of the cities represented in this study.

Worse yet, Mexican-Americans and American Indians have no representation at all in the newsgathering operation of newspapers in this state which maintains four major Indian reservations and has over 250,000 Spanish-speaking Americans, not including the migrant population.[1]

[1] Michigan Department of Education, Migrant Unit.

A few newspapers included in this study indicated that minority reporters had been hired away by larger newspapers and magazines and some minority applicants proved to be unqualified.

The solution to the dilemma facing the minority community and the journalism profession is to strengthen the most important source for minority journalists--the journalism schools. Within the next year, 33 black and 6 Mexican-American journalism majors will have graduated and will seek employment. These skilled journalists represent the most practical solution to the problem of minority representation in the Michigan press and the profession should not allow them to be absorbed into other related fields as a result of their own apathy or temporary economic conditions.

Journalism schools, with the financial assistance of the university and professional organizations, must continue to actively recruit minority students, especially Mexican-Americans and American Indians. However, if these journalists are to be expected to interpret the problems and issues of their communities, then journalism schools will have to recognize their particular needs and develop a curriculum to prepare them for their important roles.